

BACKGROUNDERS

the Chicken or the Egg?

Written by

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COLD OPEN

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

MUSIC: *Ave Maria* by Franz Schubert

Somber organ music accompanies a brunette teen singer at a mafia funeral. Mourners weep and shuffle past a wall of flowers to the casket of an elderly man with a moustache and facial scar wearing a blue tuxedo.

Nearby, DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI (70s, crimson tie, fine silk scarf) welcomes guests, shakes hands, receives condolences and congratulations in equal measure. Cheeks are kissed, vows are sworn. Hugs his consigliere, overtly pats him down.

Attendees find their seats. The soprano finishes with a flourish, curtsies. Mixed tears and applause. Funeral home employee checks her watch, whispers to a beefy mobster who conveys the message to his boss.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI
Grazie, Luca.

Don Vincenzo approaches the open casket, leans over to touch the carnation on the dead man's lapel. A teardrop falls. He rises to speak as the newly-appointed Capo di tutti capi.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI (CONT'D)
I'd like to personally thank you
all for coming out this Saint
Valentine's Day as we gather
together to express our profound
sorrow at the loss of a truly great
man. Let me take this opportunity
to welcome you, his closest
friends, family, and business
associates. You honor me with your
presence here today and for that I
am eternally grateful.

Gestures of acknowledgement from the underworld figures.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI (CONT'D)
Now, I understand that some of you
have flown long distances last
minute at great personal expense.
Just know that you will be
handsomely rewarded for your
undying loyalty and wise
consultation.

Glasses of wine are given to select mafioso.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI (CONT'D)
 Right now, Let me propose a toast.
Alla mia unica vera Famiglia:

SUPER: To my one true Family:

Don Vincenzo takes a flute from the server's tray, raises it and scans the crowd of mourners.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI (CONT'D)
 Let us mark this solemn occasion
 not as a setback for our
 organization, but as a renewal, a
 rebirth if you will. A new
 beginning for this thing of ours.

Interested grumbles from La Cosa Nostra.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI (CONT'D)
 So begins a new era of unbridled
 prosperity as we pay our respects
 to our dear departed leader, the
 one-and-only Mister Louis Boyle.

Cheers of enthusiastic approval.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI (CONT'D)
 To 'Blue' Lou Boyle!

The gangsters drink. Don Vincenzo nods to an associate. Two goombahs move to secure the exit, guns visible. Don Vincenzo reaches into the coffin and pulls out a weathered Colt 45.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI (CONT'D)
 You know what Blue Lou used to say
 right before he clipped someone?

Shocked surprise followed by stunned silence. Don Vincenzo points the weapon at a rakish youth in gold TCB sunglasses.

ELVIS WORLEY
 Not so fast, *fuckhead*.

Holding a dead man's switch, he opens his tweed sportscoat.

ELVIS WORLEY (CONT'D)
 You murdered my grandfather.

The tension escalates once the deadly stakes are made clear. Over a Hawaiian shirt, blocks of plastic explosive are wired together in a makeshift suicide vest.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI
 You're lying.

ELVIS WORLEY
Shot him 6 times at close range.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI
That's a lie. I haven't killed
anybody since 1984.

ELVIS WORLEY
It's the truth.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI
The truth is, I probably did. So
what? The fact remains, I think
you're bluffing.

ELVIS WORLEY
Am I? I did the math: this is
enough C4 to do damage that nobody
in this room will walk away from.
That's also a fact.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI
Well, here's another fact for you,
bright-boy: There's no way you'll
ever make it out of here alive.

ELVIS WORLEY
Maybe not, but you'll get the
friends and family discount for
sure. Lots of closed caskets, not
that there'll be much left to bury.

Armed men silently close in.

ELVIS WORLEY (CONT'D)
Here's the thing; I never planned
on walking out of here.
But neither will any of you.

Sensing the threat, Elvis wags the detonator in warning.

ELVIS WORLEY (CONT'D)
See, I ain't particularly scared of
dying. I'm not scared of you,
either, I just don't like you.

Hitmen are waived off by steely-eyed boss. Adversaries stare
daggers through narrowed eyes.

ELVIS WORLEY (CONT'D)
*And I'm here to fix this fucked-up
family for good.*

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI
Is that a fact?

ELVIS WORLEY
Well, if that's a fact, tell me...
Am I lying?

After an intense moment of silent stalemate. Don Vincenzo reconsiders and lowers his gun, pausing the stand-off. He pulls out a pack of cigarettes and lights one.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI
You want a Chesterfield? Mister--

ELVIS WORLEY
Call me Elvis.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI
Elvis?
(laughs bitterly)
So, that thieving whore named you
after the King of Rock 'n' Roll?

ELVIS WORLEY
Long live the king, baby.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI
Well, it appears you haven't heard
the news, Mister Worley--

He raises the pistol and cocks the hammer.

DON VINCENZO COCCOTTI (CONT'D)
The King is DEAD.

Don Vincenzo reaches for the trigger. His finger slips. The gun tumbles and lands with a thud in the corpse's groin.

'BLUE' LOU BOYLE
Ow! My balls!

The 'dead' gangster bolts upright, rolls around the casket in agony as the room bursts into laughter.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT (V.O.)
Cut!

END COLD OPEN

TITLE CARD: BACKGROUNDERS

INT. FUNERAL HOME SET - CONTINUOUS

Many voices shout 'CUT!', repeating the director's command.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT (CONT'D)
Scheisse!

With a pained expression, the actor playing Blue Lou pleads his case to a dismayed Don Vincenzo.

'BLUE' LOU BOYLE
What the hell, man?

He reaches to retrieve the rubber prop and hands it back to pale, sweaty Don Vincenzo, aka British Shakespearean thespian ALISTAIR RUMPLESTINCH (60's, lean, dignified)

ALISTAIR RUMPLESTINCH
(British accent)
I'm terribly sorry, old chap.
Purely an accident, I assure you.
The bloody thing just slipped.

INT. STUDIO SOUND STAGE - CONTINUOUS

GERHARDT KLUUNDT (50's, European chic) sits before a bank of monitors, brow furrowed. He removes his trendy glasses and runs a hand over his blonde buzzcut.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT
Lieber Gott was kommt als nächstes?

SUPER: Dear God what next?

Random mourners chat idly until production assistant KELLEY DELORENZO (20's, chubby, curly hair) scowls and hisses.

KELLEY DELORENZO
I want silence, background!

Visiting prop master gives the okay to continue filming.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT
Okay, let's reset, ya?

Relaying commands over a headset mic, assistant director JEFFREY LACHMAN (30's, lanky, USC cap) puts down his coffee cup and waves his arms.

JEFFREY LACHMAN
Alright, reset! Everybody back to one. Pictures up, let's go again. Quiet everyone!

KELLEY DELORENZO
Quiet, background!

GERHARDT KLUUNDT
So, let's pick it up from 'You
killed my grandfather', ya?

JEFFREY LACHMAN
Just a sec, boss.
Larry's got a question.

Gaffer LAWRENCE MALONE (70's, balding) approaches, followed
by hulking grips DARRYL and DARRELL (30's, tattoos, beards).

LAWRENCE MALONE
Yo Jeff, is Alistair okay? He looks
a little green around the gills.

The intimidating duo nods.

LAWRENCE MALONE
Tell 'em what you heard, Mick.

Balancing a boom mike, MICHAEL WURTZ (40's, tan) responds.

MICHAEL WURTZ
Yeah man, I've been picking up sort
of a rumbling in his, uh, lower
register, if you get my drift.

2 makeup artists touch-up the grimacing Don Vincenzo, who
rubs his midsection in obvious discomfort.

ALISTAIR RUMPLESTINCH
Oh dear.
(gurgling noises)
I'm dreadfully sorry ladies, you'll
have to excuse me.
(burp)
I'm afraid I don't feel very well.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - SUNRISE

SUPER: earlier that day

A station wagon passes a yellow EXTRAS PARKING sign and
climbs the ramp to a rooftop parking deck. The lot is empty,
save for some traffic cones and an unmarked white cargo van.

The side door opens and an Asian woman (70's, plump) gets
out wearing sunglasses & a poker visor. She trudges towards
the elevator pulling a wheeled overnight bag, Sudoku books
under one arm, folding camp chair over her shoulder.

The panel slides closed and the van pulls away, zooming past the parked station wagon and down the ramp.

THOMAS COVINGTON (40, thinning hair, dad bod) emerges, takes a sip from his travel mug, dribbles, wipes using the sleeve of his black business suit. He locks the car and stashes the keys in a backpack. Confused, Tom checks his cellphone and looks around the empty parking deck.

The Asian lady gets on the elevator and pushes a button. She beckons, encouraging Tom to hurry. He walks briskly then breaks into a jog, arriving just as the doors close. The grinning woman giggles and waves merrily as she descends.

THOMAS COVINGTON
(deflated)
Well. Alrighty then.

An electric car quietly parks. BENJAMIN PATEL (30, slim, soulful eyes) emerges holding an open laptop. He grabs a suit carrier while speaking on a Bluetooth headset, translating LINUX code from Hindi to English.

BENJAMIN PATEL
Well, have you tried turning it off and on? Try that first. See? Now Rajesh can access your data files from there. Look, I've got to run, Hollywood is calling.

Ben ends the call and joins Tom at the elevator.

THOMAS COVINGTON
I always forget to try that.

BENJAMIN PATEL
Don't worry, so does everyone else, so I put it on my business card.

Ben holds up a card that reads: *TRY TURNING IT OFF AND ON.*

BENJAMIN PATEL (CONT'D)
It doesn't bother me, I consider it job security.

THOMAS COVINGTON
How's it going? I'm Tom.

BENJAMIN PATEL
Ben. Nice to meet you.
So, what are you?

THOMAS COVINGTON
Excuse me?

BENJAMIN PATEL
What's your role today?

THOMAS COVINGTON
Oh! I'm a Funeral Goer.
But it looks like I got here a
little early. The notice said call
time was 6:30.

BENJAMIN PATEL
Did you check your email?

THOMAS COVINGTON
Of course.

BENJAMIN PATEL
What about your spam folder?

THOMAS COVINGTON
Oops. No, why?

BENJAMIN PATEL
Casting changed the call time for
mourners to 7:15.

THOMAS COVINGTON
When did this happen?

BENJAMIN PATEL
About 2 o'clock last night.

THOMAS COVINGTON
What? I was already asleep.

BENJAMIN PATEL
Welcome to the glamorous world of
background work. Rule number 1:
Always double-check your call time
as soon as you wake up.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Lesson learned.

Down below, the Asian woman scurries across the sidewalk and
gets on an idling shuttle bus.

BENJAMIN PATEL
Is this your first time on set?

THOMAS COVINGTON
I saw an ad online and thought I
might experience a little movie
magic firsthand, y'know?

BENJAMIN PATEL
Movie magic? That's beautiful. I
love your attitude, your--
what's the word? Optimism.
Yes. Hold on to that.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Thanks, I think I will. To be
honest, this is just a side hustle
so I can earn a few bucks for
school supplies.

BENJAMIN PATEL
You're a student?

THOMAS COVINGTON
Teacher. Middle-school.

BENJAMIN PATEL
What on Earth are you doing here?

THOMAS COVINGTON
I decided to start writing
screenplays again. Senior year of
college, I wrote an entire 120 page
sequel to The Outsiders.

BENJAMIN PATEL
Oh, you're a writer. I get it now.

THOMAS COVINGTON
I've always wanted to see what
making movies was really like.
Besides, we just moved here and my
wife and I are a huge Alistair
Rumplestinch fans.

BENJAMIN PATEL
He's brilliant. I just love him.
Always have, always will.

THOMAS COVINGTON
People tell me all the time that we
sort of look alike.

BENJAMIN PATEL
Well, he'll be here. We're shooting
the climactic funeral scene today.

The elevator returns and the men get on. Tom pushes the
button as more cars filter in and park.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

THOMAS COVINGTON

Is it supposed to rain today?
I missed the news. That reminds me,
I'd better let Sarah know I'm here.

Tom makes small talk as he taps out a text message.

THOMAS COVINGTON (CONT'D)

So, what do you think about this
hotshot director?

BENJAMIN PATEL

Jerry? I mean, Gerhardt Kluundt?

THOMAS COVINGTON

Film critics call him the German
Tarantino. I hear he's some kind of
visionary genius.

BENJAMIN PATEL

Really? A visionary genius? Did he
tell you that himself?

THOMAS COVINGTON

Well no, but I'm just saying--

Tom pauses, shrugs and looks to the sky. A few raindrops
patter against the elevator window.

THOMAS COVINGTON (CONT'D)

There's a real chance we could make
cinematic history today.

BENJAMIN PATEL

Cinematic history?

As Tom resumes texting, Ben gives him a world-weary grin.

BENJAMIN PATEL (CONT'D)

Stay gold, Ponyboy, stay gold.

THOMAS COVINGTON

Huh?

BENJAMIN PATEL

Never mind.

With a faraway look, Ben watches a raindrop trace its path
down the glass and turns up the K-pop on his headphones.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

ANASTASIA GLASS (30, blue-eyed blonde) rushes to beat the rain, covering her hair with a magazine. The doors close just as Stacy reaches the elevator. Furious, she angrily mashes the button and stamps her stiletto in frustration.

ACT TWO

EXT. STUDIO SOUND STAGE - MORNING

Rain washes across the warehouses of an industrial park.

I.D. badge swinging, Jeff steps over a puddle, darting between production trailers and generators while holding a coffee cup. A garbled order comes through his headset, so he seeks refuge under a dry overhang.

He reaches into his jean jacket for a smoke, which sticks to his bottom lip as he tries in vain to light it. The lighter finally catches and Jeff takes a drag. Exhaling, he looks over at the line of miserable extras waiting for a turn at the portable bathrooms.

JEFFREY LACHMAN

That ain't good.

A drop falls from the awning directly onto his cigarette and snuffs it. Demoralized, Jeff takes a deep breath and a sip of coffee. He tosses the butt in the trash and rushes off.

INT. STUDIO SOUND STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The production's key players stand comparing notes in a loose circle. Jeff drains his java as he joins the impromptu strategy session already underway.

Jerry confers with the cinematographer, flipping through a dog-eared copy of the shooting script. Larry removes his Yankees cap and scratches his balding head as he wipes away tears of laughter.

LAWRENCE MALONE

I'm just sayin', I've been doin'
this shit a long time but I ain't
never seen somebody throw up like
that, and I worked on Stand By Me.

Headphones around his neck, Mickey meticulously cleans his gear, wiping the graphite shaft of a digital boom mic.

MICHAEL WURTZ

Told you he was gonna spew.
Oh, and Kelley just got dumped.

The emotionally devastated production assistant lowers her cellphone with a stifled sob.

MICHAEL WURTZ (CONT'D)

Again.

Kelley bursts into tears and runs off with an anguished cry.

JEFFREY LACHMAN

That explains a lot, actually.

The Darrells nod in stern agreement.

JEFFREY LACHMAN (CONT'D)

But you gotta chill with the eavesdropping, Mike.

Jerry pitches the script to the floor and throws up his hands in a fit of artistic rage.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT

Nein, nein, nein! Vat don't you understand? I haf no leading man. I cannot verk like dis!

JEFFREY LACHMAN

Wait, we've already got his dialogue and a ton of B-roll. What if we change the camera angle and shoot the rest of the scene from behind? We could use the stand-in and hide his face.

The director considers and frames the scene with his hands.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT

Dat's not bad. It could verk.

A minion sheepishly approaches and whispers to Jerry.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT (CONT'D)

Vat? You sent him home? You eediot!

JEFFREY LACHMAN

Who? Ali? He's got food poisoning.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT

No, no. His stand-in.

JEFFREY LACHMAN

They did?

GERHARDT KLUUNDT

Ya. Dey. Dit.

Jeff turns to share a quiet word with Larry and Mike.

JEFFREY LACHMAN
What do you think happened?

LAWRENCE MALONE
I heard the guy got busted selling
set photos to TMZ.

MICHAEL WURTZ
Plus, he was cheating on his
boyfriend, so--

JEFFREY LACHMAN
Come on dude, what did I just say
about that?

For the German director, bottomless despair has set in.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT
Ve are completely screwed.

JEFFREY LACHMAN
Maybe not. Let me run to Holding.
Give me 20 minutes.

EXT. WAREHOUSE STUDIO - DAYBREAK

SUPER: earlier that day

Rainwater gushes out of a gutter and into a field behind the main building, creating a swampy quagmire. On the grassy slope is a large event tent holding rows of folding tables and chairs. The yellow sign reads EXTRAS HOLDING.

A shuttle bus pulls to a stop. Among the first to leave, Tom steps into the drizzle and looks anxiously to Ben, who stands opening a pocket-sized umbrella.

BENJAMIN PATEL
There's no place like home.

THOMAS COVINGTON
You're kidding, right?

BENJAMIN PATEL
I wish I was.

INT. EXTRAS HOLDING - MOMENTS LATER

Tom sits at a table filling out a form. He notices that he is sinking as his weight pushes the legs of the chair into the turf. He signs the voucher slip and rises to turn it in.

A drip from the tent plops onto his signature and rolls down the paper like a tear.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Oh, for the love of God--

From the next table, a female voice answers in a sweet Southern drawl.

HELEN MITCHELL
You poor thing.

HELEN MITCHELL (80+, frail, bifocals) sits comfortably in a Crimson Tide stadium chair. White hair in a bun, she wears the black dress and rosary of an Italian widow.

HELEN MITCHELL (CONT'D)
Go back and ask Jeff for another one, dear.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Really? I'd hate to bother him.

Munching a chicken biscuit next to Helen is WAYNE SCANLON (70's, ponytail, moustache) in a bright blue tuxedo.

WAYNE SCANLON
He's pretty cool about stuff like that, but steer clear of Kelley if you know what's good for you. She's on the warpath this morning.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Who's Kelley?

WAYNE SCANLON
Curly-headed girl next to Jeff. The one in the flannel.

HELEN MITCHELL
The P.A. in charge of Background.

WAYNE SCANLON
She threw an energy drink at one of the Darrells last week.

HELEN MITCHELL
Bless her heart.

THOMAS COVINGTON
You know, I may be new to the South but I know what that really means.

HELEN MITCHELL

Never mind that, you better go and get you some food before they run out of chicken biscuits.

WAYNE SCANLON

Yeah, them breakfast burritos are a little off this morning.

A dozen extras wait in line, shuffling forward to grab a foil-wrapped lump and a carton of generic orange drink.

THOMAS COVINGTON

You know, I think I will. Thanks.

Tom sets off across the squishy ground, hopping over a puddle and squeezing between the rows of tables.

HELEN MITCHELL

Bless his heart.

INT. WARDROBE DEPARTMENT - LATE MORNING

Jeff bites his nails and sips coffee as he meets with a middle-aged woman in cat's eye glasses. Measuring tape draped around her neck, she holds a portable tablet which displays a photo lineup of mourners.

JEFFREY LACHMAN

What do you think?

She zooms in to focus on Tom Covington in his black suit. After a moment of careful scrutiny, she shrugs and nods.

JEFFREY LACHMAN (CONT'D)

That's all I needed to hear--

Turning on his heel, Jeff dashes away, sprinting between rows of hangers as he disappears into the maze of clothing.

INT. HAIR AND MAKEUP TRAILER - LATER

Tom Covington sits wide-eyed in front of a make-up mirror in Don Vincenzo's suit. A grey wig is unceremoniously plopped onto his head. The goth hairdresser tugs and pulls it over his skull, then fastens it with a pierced mouthful of pins.

BENJAMIN PATEL

Welcome to the party, pal.

Tom grins and looks around at five people being touched-up in the other chairs. Next to Ben is MATTHEW O'LEARY (20's, boyish, biracial). Across from Matt is REBECCA LYNN DEERING (20, doe-eyed brunette).

In the center flexing his triceps sits CHADRICK RASMUSSEN (25, Danish, hunky) in his new black pompadour and pencil-thin moustache.

THOMAS COVINGTON
So, are all of you stand-ins?

In the corner, blonde beauty ANASTASIA GLASS scowls as she sips her green tea.

ANASTASIA GLASS
Not all of us.

Matt rolls his eyes and waves her off as he and Ben admire Chad's impressive display.

MATTHEW O'LEARY
Yes Barbie, we know.

BENJAMIN PATEL
I'm the organist today, so I'm what they call 'featured' background.

Stacy snickers sarcastically as Jeff opens the trailer door, coffee in hand. He shakes the raindrops from his ball cap and steps inside.

JEFFREY LACHMAN
If you guys are done, I need you on set with Second Unit.

The group stirs and gathers its things. Tom rises to join them, but Jeff puts a hand on his shoulder.

JEFFREY LACHMAN (CONT'D)
Not you, Don Vincenzo.

Ben and Matt dish the dirt as they head for the exit.

BENJAMIN PATEL
Food poisoning? Wait, I thought he was a strict vegetarian?

MATTHEW O'LEARY
That's just PR bullshit. My agent does Goat Yoga with his publicist.

Finishing touches are put on Tom's new 'do. Jeff crouches to encourage his replacement Godfather.

JEFFREY LACHMAN
I know this all might seem a little overwhelming. How you holding up?

THOMAS COVINGTON
A little nervous, I guess.

JEFFREY LACHMAN
Completely understandable.
Don't worry, you'll be great.

Reassured, Tom studies his reflection.

JEFFREY LACHMAN (CONT'D)
I owe you big. You're doing the
studio a huge favor.

THOMAS COVINGTON
A favor? That wasn't a favor. You
made me an offer I couldn't refuse.

INT. EXTRAS HOLDING - MORNING

SUPER: earlier that day

Tom scrapes mud from his wingtips at the back of the food line. In front of him, BROCK BRADLEY (50's, brawny, rugged) carries BRIANNA BRADLEY (19, green eyes, petite) in his arms. The queue crawls ahead two paces through the mud when Brianna's dress catches the corner of a folding chair.

BROCK BRADLEY
Watch your dress, sweetheart.

BRIANNA BRADLEY
Yes, Daddy.

Concerned, Tom darts in and frees the girl's black evening gown. She leans back to him with a mischievous grin.

BRIANNA BRADLEY (CONT'D)
(whispers)
I'm not wearing underwear.

The young woman gives the stunned Tom a cheeky wink.

BROCK BRADLEY
You alright, princess?

BRIANNA BRADLEY
Yes, Daddy.

DEONTAE FERNANDEZ
(Cuban accent)
Yo, she's not joking, acere.

Startled, Tom turns to see young black actor and pretend funeral home employee DEONTAE FERNANDEZ (20, angular face, wild hair) behind him wearing an amused smirk.

THOMAS COVINGTON
I'll take your word for it.

DEONTAE FERNANDEZ
Esa jeva es un mango. I'd ask her out, but her pops would kill me.

THOMAS COVINGTON
I would too. I'm a father myself.

DEONTAE FERNANDEZ
No, I mean he's ex-CIA.
He would literally kill me.

THOMAS COVINGTON
That guy? I believe it. He looks like Kurt Russell ate Vin Diesel.

DEONTAE FERNANDEZ
Well, all I know is Daddy's Little Girl may look innocent, but--

A commotion at the head of the line stops Deontae mid-sentence. The remaining extras groan and wander away.

DEONTAE FERNANDEZ
Uh-oh. Coño!

THOMAS COVINGTON
What happened?

DEONTAE FERNANDEZ
They just ran out of chicken biscuits, yo.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Guess I'll grab a burrito then.
Looks like there's still a few of them left.

DEONTAE FERNANDEZ
Yeah, good luck with that. I'm out.

Deontae surveys the sea of faces. With a pirouette, he mambos around puddles over to a nearby table and introduces himself to its female occupants with a charming grin.

Realizing that everyone has bailed, Tom slogs up to the craft services table.

An aluminum warming pan sits empty, while a second holds a dozen foil-wrapped logs. With a sigh, Tom selects one from the pile.

THOMAS COVINGTON
(mutters)
How bad can it be?

Grabbing one of the few remaining cartons of orange drink, he tears it open and samples the contents. Swallowing, his face scrunches up in the sour pucker of instant regret.

THOMAS COVINGTON
--Oh.

ACT THREE

INT. FUNERAL HOME SET - AFTERNOON

The set is a hive of activity. Assistants and coordinators scurry about in preparation for filming.

BEGIN MONTAGE

1. The Darrells raise banks of shrouded light panels.
2. Larry barks out instructions and uses a laptop to dim the brightness a few points.
3. Cameramen crowd around a rolling dolly and its recording equipment as it glides along a section of track.
4. Digital milliseconds blip by on a display panel as the director of photography blocks out the shot.

END MONTAGE

The back of a grey wig is brought in and out of focus before the lens zooms in over Tom's shoulder. Amid the rows of empty seats, Matt sits in Elvis Worley's spot busily scrolling away on his phone.

On the viewing platform, Tom peeks at the floor before spotting the 'X' of pink gaffer tape that identifies his mark. He looks up to see Ben at the organist's bench idly fingering the keys as he shares rumors with Matthew.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Was that a joke?

MATTHEW O'LEARY
I was there and I can confirm that
it was not.

THOMAS COVINGTON
I mean, surely you can't be serious.

BENJAMIN PATEL
Oh, but I am serious.
And don't call me Shirley.

THOMAS COVINGTON
16 hours on set?

BENJAMIN PATEL
That's a fact, Jack.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Like, in a row?

MATTHEW O'LEARY
That's showbiz, baby.

The remaining stand-ins and featured background actors filter in, splitting up to assume their previous positions:

BEGIN MONTAGE

1. Family matriarch Helen retakes her front row seat.
2. Stacy sits a row behind, portraying the Don's goomah.
3. Mob enforcer Brock smooths his slicked-back hair.
4. Hitman Chad sips a protein shake while swiping right.
5. Singer Brianna straddles the microphone stand, sticks out her pierced tongue and takes a selfie.

END MONTAGE

Deontae dances with funeral home employee PENELOPE LAFLEUR (35, heavysset, infectious smile). He motions to a young woman reading a script and flashes a hopeful smile.

DEONTAE FERNANDEZ
Hey hermosa, come join us.

Rehearsing her lines as the boss's daughter, Becky Lynn rolls her eyes and ignores him.

Nearby, Blue Lou Boyle approaches the funeral platform, tucks a flask into his tuxedo jacket and grins, wrinkling the edge of his fake scar.

WAYNE SCANLON
Little help?

Wayne puts a hand on Tom's shoulder and climbs into the casket, sinking into the coffin's plush interior.

WAYNE SCANLON

Think it's time for a nap. Wake me up when it's over, chief.

With the faint sound of Southern rock in his earbuds, he folds his hands over his chest and closes his eyes.

In the near-empty audience, Matt suddenly rises in his seat with a gasp, eyes glued to his phone.

MATTHEW O'LEARY

Ha, I knew it!

Benji's ears perk up as his gossip radar goes off and several heads turn to hear the breaking news.

BENJAMIN PATEL

Well? Spill the tea, darling.

MATTHEW O'LEARY

Oh dear, it seems SOMEONE leaked photos of Alistair Rumpelstinch with a mouthful of sausage.

BENJAMIN PATEL

Now, THAT I'd like to see.

THOMAS COVINGTON

He's gay?

MATTHEW O'LEARY

I wish.

THOMAS COVINGTON

So what's the big deal?

BENJAMIN PATEL

Elementary, my dear Watson. He's not gay, he's--

MATTHEW O'LEARY AND BENJAMIN PATEL

'VEGAN'.

MATTHEW O'LEARY

Says here he supposedly eats a full-on English breakfast every morning: Baked beans, grilled tomatoes, black pudding, the works.

THOMAS COVINGTON

Uh oh.

Caffeinated Jeff zooms onto the set and joins Tom at the casket. He reaches into Blue Lou's coat, spins the cap from Wayne's flask, adds a wee dram to his coffee and stirs it with a ballpoint.

Jeff returns the hooch and cautiously takes a scalding sip. He puts the dripping pen in his mouth, holds it like a cigarette, inspects his new stand-in and nods agreeably.

THOMAS COVINGTON (CONT'D)

How am I doing?

JEFFREY LACHMAN

You're doing great Alistair, just stay on your mark.

THOMAS COVINGTON

Sarah's never gonna believe this.

JEFFREY LACHMAN

Sorry you didn't get to meet him. Usually Ali stops by the holding tent before filming to thank the background.

THOMAS COVINGTON

Yeah. Um, about that. There's something I've been meaning to--

A squawk of radio chatter in Jeff's earpiece diverts his attention. He pauses, listening with an index finger raised.

JEFFREY LACHMAN

(headset mic)

Copy that.

(to room)

Alright listen up! Jerry likes what he sees.

(headset mic)

Kelley, bring our background friends over to set.

KELLEY DELORENZO (V.O.)

(dejected)

Yeah, sure. Whatever. I mean, what's the point? Copy that.

JEFFREY LACHMAN

(headset mic)

Stay on target, Gold Leader. Hang in there Kiki, it gets better.

THOMAS COVINGTON
 You do know what happened to those
 guys, right?

JEFFREY LACHMAN
 They helped defeat the Empire and
 became famous?

THOMAS COVINGTON
 They went down in flames.

JEFFREY LACHMAN
 (grins)
 Sounds like a win-win to me.
 (to room)
 Okay, I need First Team in here.
 Let's make a movie, people!

INT. EXTRAS HOLDING - MORNING

SUPER: earlier that day

Sitting back at his table, Tom winces as he sips from the
 tiny carton of orange drink. His neighbors look on in
 amusement as Tom begins unwrapping his breakfast burrito.

WAYNE SCANLON
 Man, he must be desperate.

HELEN MITCHELL
 Bless his heart.

While he picks at the foil, GLORIA HAYNES (45, bald,
 beautiful) approaches Tom's table carrying a takeout
 container and several manila folders.

WAYNE SCANLON
 There she is.

HELEN MITCHELL
 Better late than never, hun.

GLORIA HAYNES
 Story of my life, Mama.
 (to Tom)
 Is this seat taken?

THOMAS COVINGTON
 No. Please, sit down. I'm Tom.

Shaking his hand, she smiles and sets down her things.

GLORIA HAYNES
 I think I will. Hi, I'm Gloria.

HELEN MITCHELL
What took you so long?

GLORIA HAYNES
Stopped to pick up some breakfast.

Slicing through layers of cellophane with a fingernail, she pulls away the wrapping and pops open the Styrofoam lid.

WAYNE SCANLON
What ya got there, darlin'?

GLORIA HAYNES
Just a little snack.

HELEN MITCHELL
Crew food again?

GLORIA HAYNES
Better.

Tom re-wraps the breakfast burrito and takes a quick peek to check out Gloria's steaming pile of hot food. He leans over to catch a whiff and his stomach growls.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Wow, that smells amazing.

GLORIA HAYNES
Would you like some?
There's absolutely no way I'm gonna be able to finish all this.

THOMAS COVINGTON
That's very kind of you.
Are you sure?

Gloria dangles a charred, floppy slice of tomato from a plastic fork and flicks it into the grass.

GLORIA HAYNES
Sure I'm sure. I just want the scrambled eggs and toast.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Thank you, Gloria. Seriously, you're a lifesaver. I owe you one.

GLORIA HAYNES
Nah, your welcome. Consider it a gift on your first day. Here, help yourself. You can have those beans. Take the mushrooms and that funky-ass sausage, too.

INT. FUNERAL HOME SET - EVENING

Jeff sits behind the Director of Photography checking out the raw feed. Crew members make comments in his earpiece while the scene draws to a close.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT
And...Cut.

JEFFREY LACHMAN
CUT! That's a cut!

Kelley argues with her phone.

KELLEY DELORENZO
(angry)
Oh yeah, THAT's a cut! Whatever.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT
Dat was good. Lighting looked good?

JEFFREY LACHMAN
Looked great to me.

LAWRENCE MALONE (V.O.)
(earpiece)
Wait for it.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT
Mm-hmm. Ya, dat was very good.

JEFFREY LACHMAN
Best one yet.

MICHAEL WURTZ (V.O.)
(earpiece)
Wait for it.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT
Spot on, ya?

JEFFREY LACHMAN
You really nailed it.

LAWRENCE MALONE (V.O.)
(earpiece)
Don't tell me.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT
Ya, dat was PERFECT. Let's do it
one more time--

MICHAEL WURTZ (V.O.)
 (earpiece)
 In nature, nothing is perfect and
 everything is perfect.

JEFFREY LACHMAN
 Hey Jerry, Background is gonna need
 a few minutes. A few of our
 mourners ate the burritos and need
 to use the restroom.

GERHARDT KLUUNDT
 Ya, I think we got what we need.
 Let's take a break and reset.

MICHAEL WURTZ (V.O.)
 (earpiece)
 Hey Jeff, ask Jerry what's up with
 that last-minute script revision?
 Is the studio changing the ending?

JEFFREY LACHMAN
 (headset mic)
 I'll ask, but you really gotta stop
 doing that. He's already paranoid.
 (to room)
 That's a break, everybody!
 Good job, everyone.

KELLEY DELORENZO
 Background, if you need to use the
 restroom, NOW'S the fuckin' time!
 (bitterly)
 Or not, who cares?

JEFFREY LACHMAN
 Remember where you were sitting. I
 need you all back here in 10.

Tom spots Gloria at the edge of the set. She looks
 devastating, dripping with bling in a black evening dress,
 loops of caramel hair coiled under a jeweled veil.

In stockings and stilettos, the femme fatale chats quietly
 with the script supervisor. He nods and excitedly scrawls on
 a legal pad. The inspired writer grabs his notes and calls
 out to Jerry excitedly.

Gloria walks over to share a few words with Penelope. The
 big girl dances like no one's watching as the ladies enjoy a
 playful laugh.

Tom sees his chance and abandons his post, striding
 purposefully to confront the suspected food thief.

THOMAS COVINGTON
So, how did you get it?

GLORIA HAYNES
Hey there. You still hungry?

THOMAS COVINGTON
Blackmail?

GLORIA HAYNES
That's an ugly word, Tom.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Extortion?

GLORIA HAYNES
You should be thanking me.

THOMAS COVINGTON
That's not the point.
How did you get it?

GLORIA HAYNES
Like anything else around here.
Networking.

THOMAS COVINGTON
You got it from Alistair's stand-
in, didn't you?

GLORIA HAYNES
No telling where it came from.

THOMAS COVINGTON
You knew that he was selling photos
to the tabloids?

GLORIA HAYNES
Of course. It was my idea.
Doesn't matter now, does it?

THOMAS COVINGTON
Who turned him in?
I guess I should thank them.

GLORIA HAYNES
Thank her yourself.

With a satisfied grin, Penny takes a deep theatrical bow.

THOMAS COVINGTON
You?

GLORIA HAYNES
You're welcome.

PENELOPE LAFLEUR
I'm glad he's gone. He was a dick.
He made fun of my stunt videos.
I trained really hard for them.

GLORIA HAYNES
She's very good.

PENELOPE LAFLEUR
Besides, it was Gloria's idea.
She looks out for us.

GLORIA HAYNES
I try.

PENELOPE LAFLEUR
Plus, we got better parts.

THOMAS COVINGTON
We?

GLORIA HAYNES
Uh, hello? It WAS my idea.

PENELOPE LAFLEUR
I've been preparing for this day my
whole career, and it's finally here
thanks to her.

GLORIA HAYNES
She's gonna get shot.

PENELOPE LAFLEUR
I'm so excited.

THOMAS COVINGTON
What about you? You look like a
Bond girl. What's your role?

GLORIA HAYNES
I'm still working on that.

INT. FUNERAL HOME SET - CONTINUOUS

KELLEY DELORENZO
(dejected)
Silence, Background.
(sigh)
Dead silence.

Trying hard to keep it together, the heartbroken P.A. can barely squeak out the words before her bottom lip quivers.

KELLEY DELORENZO

Back to--
 (sniff)
 Back to--
 (sob)
 Back to one...

HELEN MITCHELL

Someone's having a bad day.

ANASTASIA GLASS

Lord knows I've been there.

HELEN MITCHELL

Pretty sure we all have, dear.

Kelley watches cat videos on her phone and smiles weakly.

ANASTASIA GLASS

Kelley's not so bad.
 She's got a tough job.

HELEN MITCHELL

That poor girl deserves a spa day.

ANASTASIA GLASS

Fabulous idea. I'm in. Maybe I'll ask if she wants to come with--

Kelley looks up and dabs at her eyes with a napkin.

HELEN MITCHELL

We can get our hair and nails done.

ANASTASIA GLASS

I love it! Leave everything to me,
 I know the perfect place. Best
 mani-pedi in Buckhead. Hot stones,
 a little wine, and a nice facial.

Kelley rises and marches over to the chatty extras.

HELEN MITCHELL

Well, speak of the devil.
 Here she comes now.

ANASTASIA GLASS

Ooh, this is gonna be so much fun!

KELLEY DELORENZO
 (angry hiss)
 I said I want SILENCE, background!

ANASTASIA GLASS
 Never mind.

HELEN MITCHELL
 Bless her heart.

EXT. STUDIO SOUND STAGE - MORNING

SUPER: earlier that day

Emerging from the bathroom, Tom notices that the rain has subsided and slings his backpack over a shoulder. He walks toward EXTRAS HOLDING. Lights above the studio doors flash red and harsh buzzers warn the uninitiated to be quiet.

An army of backgrounders exit the tent. Benji spies Tom, gives a whistle and waves his arms. The teacher flashes a peace sign and Ben rejoins the herd marching up the sloppy hill toward the studio.

As Tom reaches the walkway, the alarm stops and a black minivan slows to a stop at the curb. The disheveled passenger gets out in a blazer, linen shirt and jeans. Alistair Rumpelstinch opens a Union Jack umbrella.

THOMAS COVINGTON
 It's you.

ALISTAIR RUMPLESTINCH
 (British accent)
 Yes, well, I suppose it is. Hello. Unfortunately, I am also dreadfully late and curse the luck, it would seem that someone has apparently misplaced my morning meal and I am absolutely famished. So yea, good sir, be there yet any nourishment remaining within yonder tent?

THOMAS COVINGTON
 I have a breakfast burrito--

More than a little star-struck, Tom pulls the suspect bacon, egg, and processed cheese torpedo from his backpack.

ALISTAIR RUMPLESTINCH
 A breakfast burrito, you say?

The hungry Brit eagerly accepts Tom's parcel.

ALISTAIR RUMPLESTINCH (CONT'D)

What a scrumptious gastronomic treat! This might come as a surprise to you, but I've never sampled this particular Yankee delicacy because, as I'm sure you're aware, I've been living a strict vegan lifestyle for quite a number of years. Tell me, good sir, what do I owe you? How can I repay you for your unselfish act?

THOMAS COVINGTON

Could I get an autograph? Maybe a picture? My wife Sarah is a huge fan, by the way.

ALISTAIR RUMPLESTINCH

Oh dear. Terribly sorry, old chap. Afraid I haven't got a pen at the moment and I must get to wardrobe.

THOMAS COVINGTON

That's OK.
I'm just glad I got to meet you.

ALISTAIR RUMPLESTINCH

I'm sorry it was so brief. I do hope I wasn't too disappointing.

THOMAS COVINGTON

Not at all. You were nice. You were humble. You weren't a jerk.

ALISTAIR RUMPLESTINCH

Yes, well, thank you. You're very kind to say so. My best to Sarah.

As he is led away, the longtime BBC stalwart pauses and turns back with an Oscar-worthy smile.

ALISTAIR RUMPLESTINCH (CONT'D)

Tell you what; Come find me when we wrap and I'll sign whatever you like, take as many photos as you like. How's that sound?

THOMAS COVINGTON

You had me at hello, Mister Rumblestinch.

ALISTAIR RUMPLESTINCH

Call me Ali, all my friends do.

Ali unravels the foil from the burrito and takes a big bite with an impatient assistant tugging at his elbow.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Okay Ali, I will.

Sir Alistair Rumpelstinch departs with a cheerful wave and a newly-acquired case of Salmonella poisoning.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

A line of cars file out of the parking deck. The elevator opens. Tom, Gloria, Ben, and Penny exit mid-conversation.

THOMAS COVINGTON
So, let me get this straight.
You're playing my--
I mean, *Don Vincenzo's* long lost
secret mistress?

GLORIA HAYNES
My character is an informant living
a quiet life in witness protection.
Until you kill our autistic son.

BENJAMIN PATEL
I'm so happy Matthew got the part.

THOMAS COVINGTON
And now you're back for revenge?

BENJAMIN PATEL
She's there to roar and rampage and
get bloody satisfaction.

THOMAS COVINGTON
I'll say. She drives a purple
Cadillac through the doors with
guns blazing and kills me.
I mean, *Him*.

GLORIA HAYNES
Exactly. Technically it's only one
gun, but yeah, that's the idea.

THOMAS COVINGTON
And we find out the bosses daughter
is secretly in love with Elvis?

BENJAMIN PATEL
Weren't we all?

PENELOPE LAFLEUR
That's when I get killed by you.

THOMAS COVINGTON
You mean Don Vincenzo.

GLORIA HAYNES
Better than that, she saves our
lives diving in front of the gun.

PENELOPE LAFLEUR
No big deal. Barrel roll over the
hood, slide down the bumper to the
floor. Few squibs and a couple
blood bags. Standard stuff.

THOMAS COVINGTON
Then Elvis finds the diamonds and
flies to Tahiti with my daughter.
HIS daughter. Ali's daughter.

BENJAMIN PATEL
Yay! A good, old-fashioned happy
ending. What's wrong with that?

THOMAS COVINGTON
Leaving you to take over as the new
Lady Godfather of Detroit.

GLORIA HAYNES
Better late than never.
But that's all for tomorrow.

PENELOPE LAFLEUR
Are you coming back?

BENJAMIN PATEL
What do you say, Shane?

THOMAS COVINGTON
I don't know, I'll have to talk it
over with Sarah. Kinda bummed I
never got a picture with Alistair.

GLORIA HAYNES
Check your messages.

A text notification shows a new attachment. Tom opens it to
see a video of himself talking with Alistair Rumplestinch.

THOMAS COVINGTON
This is great. You took this?

GLORIA HAYNES
Don't share it with TMZ.

THOMAS COVINGTON
How did you know where to send it?

GLORIA HAYNES
Fear not, doubting Thomas.

Gloria holds up a few typewritten sheets of paper stapled together at the corner. Benji lets out a startled gasp.

THOMAS COVINGTON
What is it? Larry's homework?

BENJAMIN PATEL
(hushed awe)
The stuff that dreams are made of.

GLORIA HAYNES
The studio's Master call sheet.

BENJAMIN PATEL
Behold. The Holy Grail. The full legal name, phone number and email address of basically everyone on set. Every single B.G., P.A., A.D., Crew, Crafty or criminal on this entire project.

THOMAS COVINGTON
How'd you get your hands on that?
Wait, let me guess--

GLORIA HAYNES
Networking.

CREDITS

POST CREDITS

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

The parking deck is completely empty. 2 pink voucher slips are caught by a gust of wind and spiral into an updraft. A crow pecks at the remains of a discarded burrito, only to be startled by the parting doors of the elevator.

Pushing a wheeled overnight bag with a small cooler perched on top, the anonymous Asian woman steps onto the rooftop lot wearing her oversized sunglasses and tinted poker visor.

As if on cue, a white cargo van climbs the ramp and pulls to a stop beside her. The side door opens and she ambles inside with her things. It slides closed behind her and the mysterious vehicle pulls away, heading down the exit ramp bearing the vanity license plate: YKZA-1.